



Plan to Ease Teton Traffic

A new plan at Grand Teton would promote mass transit

GRAND TETON, N.P., WYO.-Visitors to Grand Teton National Park may soon have more diverse transit options if elements of a new study are followed and funded.

In January, the Park Service issued a final draft of a transportation study that recommends ways to move away from automobile-based travel and increase opportunities for mass transit, bicycling, and walking. The study was drafted with help from 35 appointed members of local and national interest groups, including Tony Jewett, NPCA's Northern Rockies regional director. "The study is visionary and far-reaching," said Jewett. "It is strong and ambitious in its recommendations to move away from automobiles and into mass transit and muscle-powered alternatives," such as biking and walking.

Some suggestions for promoting bicycling in the park include paving shoulders of existing roads to create bike lanes, designing pathways separate from roads, and improving signs and parking for bicycles. For pedestrians, the plan proposes sharing bicycle pathways, using more signs to clearly define walking trails, and improving facilities in major activity centers. "The lack of provision for walking in [major activity centers] results in a significant amount of driving for short trips that most people would be willing to make by foot," the study states.

The plan also focuses on expanding mass transit. According to Cam Hugie, the chief of facility management at the park, the nearby community of Jackson is working on a mass transit plan that could link up with major destinations in the park including trailheads, viewpoints, and lodges.

Hugie acknowledged that Grand Teton does not have the same level of traffic problems found in parks such as Yosemite or Zion. According to Hugie, the biggest problem in Grand Teton is parking. "The question is: Do you keep building bigger and bigger parking lots or do you look at alternatives?" he said. "It's important to promote alternative transportation now before the problems get worse."

The number of automobiles has increased as the number of visitors has climbed from 3.52 million in 1993 to 4.16 million in 1999. Future projections indicate a 17-percent increase in visitation by 2005.

Hugie said that the park will complete additional studies, such as intercept surveys, which involve stopping people driving through the park and asking them

questions about their travels. The park will then present a series of proposals and complete environmental assessments. Hugie said he hopes that by this summer the public will be asked to comment on the proposals.

"We face the typical challenge of all parks—trying to get people out of their cars," he said. "This plan gives us good guidance and direction for the future so we can be proactive in dealing with issues before we end up in trouble."

-William A. Updike